



GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

November 17, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Through: Ms. Karen Armes
Acting Regional Director, Region IX
Federal Emergency Management Agency
1111 Broadway Street
Suite 1200
Oakland, California 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President,

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the State of California as a result of extremely high winds and wildfires beginning November 13, 2008. At this time, impacted counties include Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Santa Barbara. Winds exceeding 70 miles per hour have worsened fire conditions by fanning the flames, causing them to spread with frightening speed. This wind and fire event has already consumed more than 40,000 acres; caused widespread human injury; destroyed and damaged homes, businesses, schools, hospitals and infrastructure throughout the region; and it continues to threaten the lives and safety of many Californians.

In response to the situation, I took appropriate action under state law, directed the execution of the State Emergency Plan on November 13, 2008, in accordance with the Stafford Act and proclaimed a state of emergency for Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Santa Barbara counties. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved my request for three Fire Management Assistance declarations for the Tea Fire in Santa Barbara County, the Sayre Fire in Los Angeles County and the Freeway Fire, which crossed the border of Orange and Riverside counties and is now affecting San Bernardino County. California also has a FEMA-approved enhanced statewide hazard mitigation plan.

Statistics from the 209 reports on the National Fire and Aviation Management website show that, to date, these wildfires have scorched more than 40,000 acres, destroying 858 homes, 10 businesses and 110 outbuildings. In addition, 136 homes have been damaged and a potentially high number of home-based businesses and rental properties have been damaged or destroyed.

The President
November 17, 2008
Page two

Threatened structures include more than 12,550 residences, 100 commercial buildings and 200 outbuildings. There have also been 18 firefighter injuries. State and local agency response costs are estimated to be \$15 million per day.

On November 15, 2008, I requested a joint federal, state and local survey of the damaged areas. A joint Preliminary Damage Assessment began November 17 in Santa Barbara and Orange counties and will be expanded to include the other three impacted counties when conditions improve enough to be considered safe.

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments, and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary. I am specifically requesting Individual Assistance (including the Individuals and Households Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling and Disaster Legal Services); Public Assistance (Categories A-G); statewide Hazard Mitigation; and any other Stafford Act disaster assistance programs that may be appropriate for the five declared counties. I am also requesting U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loans and funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Emergency Loan Program.

Preliminary estimates of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are tabulated in Enclosures A and B. Estimated requirements for assistance from federal agencies under other statutory authorities are tabulated in Enclosure C.

Historically, California residents have been uninsured or seriously underinsured. Many mobile home owners, especially the elderly, are on fixed incomes; as a result, insurance coverage is not often a priority. Due to low income levels, owners often divert their available funds to pay for health care, prescriptions and other necessities, especially when their mortgage has been paid in full. In Los Angeles County, the majority of destroyed residences were mobile homes owned by people in this situation. Due to our current economic crisis, homes in California are also currently valued lower than their outstanding mortgages. Owners are unlikely to have adequate funds, as they must pay for current mortgages, rebuilding expenses and temporary housing.

Voluntary agencies do not have the resources necessary to address the unmet financial needs of such a large population that requires assistance with temporary housing, personal property, medical, dental and funeral expenses.

To alleviate these conditions, I have deployed or will soon deploy all state and local government emergency mutual aid resources, including fire fighting, law enforcement, medical and public health emergency responders. I have activated the State Operations Center and the Southern California regional emergency operation center. The California National Guard has been activated to supplement local and state emergency responders. I have also used out-of-state resources to assist in fire suppression activities.

The President
November 17, 2008
Page three

I certify that, for this major disaster, the state and local governments will assume all applicable nonfederal shares of cost required by the Stafford Act.

I request direct federal assistance for work and services to save lives and protect property. Due to the severity of this disaster, it may take some time for state or local government to perform or contract for this type of work and these services. In accordance with 44 CFR § 206.208, the State of California agrees that it will, with respect to direct federal assistance:

1. Provide without cost to the United States all lands, easements and rights of ways necessary to accomplish the approved work.
2. Hold and save the United States free from damages due to the requested work, and shall indemnify the Federal Government against any claims arising from such work.
3. Provide reimbursement to FEMA for the nonfederal share of the cost of such work in accordance with the provisions of the FEMA-State Agreement.
4. Assist the performing federal agency in all support and local jurisdictional matters.

I anticipate the need to remove debris that poses an immediate threat to lives, public health and safety. Pursuant to Sections 403 and 407 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170b & 5173, the state agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America for any claims arising from the removal of debris or wreckage for this disaster. The state agrees that debris removal from public and private property will not occur until the landowner signs an unconditional authorization for the removal of debris.

Flooding, debris flows and mud flows are an imminent threat following any major fire. Winter rains, even at average rates, can produce significant runoff with increased velocity down hillsides, resulting in mud flows and flash flooding. Similar conditions in previous disasters claimed lives and caused significant damage to infrastructure, private residences, roadways and railways. Given rainfall trends and National Weather Service projections for heavy rainfall in the burn-affected areas, these communities are likely to sustain additional, ongoing damages as a direct result of the wildfires. Therefore, I request that your declaration address anticipated flooding, mud flows and debris flows for the burn areas. I also request reimbursement for premobilization, which began November 12, 2008, in anticipation of the wind event.

I have designated Mr. Henry Renteria as the state coordinating officer for this request. He will work with FEMA in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Sincerely,



Arnold Schwarzenegger